



TRANSPORTATION SAFETY & ADVISORY COMMISSION

CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

TO: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen

FROM: Brad Reed, Transportation Planner

DATE: May 18, 2011

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary from May 4, 2011 Meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on Wednesday May 4, 2011 at 9:00AM in City Council Chambers at the Community Development Building, 409 South Main Street.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Brad Reed (Public Works), Thanh Dang (Public Works), Len Van Wyk (citizen member & acting chair of this meeting), Russell Presnell (citizen member), MPO Greg Deeds (Police member), Sgt. Roger Knott (Police), Off. Paul Helmuth (Fire), Reggie Smith (Public Transportation), Doug Stader (DMV), Sgt. Andy Muncy (Rockingham County Sheriff's Office)

Guests Present: None

Citizens are always provided the opportunity to voice their views/concerns about any item before the commission. It is the policy of the Commission to move the agenda item to the beginning of the meeting when citizens attend Commission meetings to avoid detaining citizens for the entire meeting. However, any citizen is welcome to stay for the entire meeting.

Welcome

New Business

1. Appoint new Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee member

The Commission reviewed two applications for the vacant seat on the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee. Mr. Van Wyk recommended that the Commission choose Carl Droms because he appears to be the stronger candidate based upon his application. The Commission voted to appoint Carl Droms as a member of the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee.

2. Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program – Pleasant Hill Acres

Ms. Dang explained that the Pleasant Hill Acres neighborhood has returned to an active status in the Traffic Calming Program after complaints about vehicular accidents and speeding in the neighborhood were received by Public Works. The four vehicular accidents brought to the City's attention occurred on Central Avenue near Vale Circle and involved moving vehicles striking parked cars. One of these accidents was the result of a drunk driver, another took place when there was snow on the pavement, another involved a very high speed estimated at 65 mph, and the last took place under normal conditions at night.

This neighborhood became enrolled in the Traffic Calming Program in 2002 after complaints surfaced regarding speeding and "cut-through" traffic on Central Avenue. Past collaboration between the neighborhood and City staff resulted in the striping of the white edge line and double yellow line on Central Avenue to narrow the street to 10' lanes, as well as the installation of increased fine placards on the speed limit signs on Central Avenue.

A neighborhood representative meeting was held on May 2nd to discuss the neighbor's existing concerns and what the next steps will be to resolve them.

Staff shared with the attendees the results of a traffic study performed in April, which found that speeding is currently an issue in two locations: Central Avenue between Perry Street and Emery Street, and Emery Street between Pleasant Hill Road and Tamela Court. Staff also performed an origin-destination study on Central Avenue to assess the amount of "cut-through" traffic. It was found that 17% of all traffic on Central Avenue was thru traffic, which is well below the 40% value at which VDOT and the City would consider there to be a "cut-through" problem.

Ms. Dang went on to share that the neighbors expressed concerns regarding several issues on Central Avenue: accidents near Vale Circle, speeding, "cut-through" traffic, pedestrian safety due to lack of sidewalks, and vehicles failing to yield to pedestrians at the intersection with South Avenue. It was explained that the City would consider constructing sidewalks on Central Avenue if the neighborhood were to support a 50/50 cost share with the City. Typically, the

resident's portion of this cost share would be covered by their dedication of the necessary right of way. The neighborhood representative group expressed interest in taking part in the Team Up to Slow Down program. The next step for the neighborhood will be a neighborhood-wide meeting, which is planned to be held during the week of June 6th.

Old Business

3. Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program - Old Town update

Ms. Dang informed the Commission that the Fire Department is not in support of adding on street parking on Franklin Street due to the limited road width, so that component of the traffic Old Town Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan will be removed. Ms. Dang went on to explain that four improvements in the Plan will be installed this summer in conjunction with repaving on Ott Street, all of which will be completed at the City's cost. These improvements include a raised intersection at Franklin Street & Ott Street, a speed hump on Bruce Street between Ott Street and Myers Avenue, a speed table with crosswalk on Franklin Street between Monticello Avenue and Myers Avenue, and the narrowing of the North side of Franklin Street between Monticello Avenue and Myers Avenue by installing a white edge line and removing the double yellow line. All of these improvements were named by the neighborhood as being top priorities.

4. Speed limit change on Old Furnace Road

Mr. Reed shared staff's findings from a second speed study on Old Furnace Road, as had been requested at the prior Commission meeting to examine the possibility of changing the entire 45 mph section to 35 mph along with the shortening of the 25 mph zone between Blue Ridge Drive and the entrance to East Brook Manor apartments. Speeds were measured on Old Furnace Road on the downhill section between Blue Ridge Drive and Oriole Lane in the current 45 mph zone and it was found that vehicles traveling westbound had an 85th percentile speed of 44 mph, while vehicles traveling eastbound had an 85th percentile speed of 49 mph. Speeds were also measured on Old Furnace Road between Oriole Lane and Smithland Road in the current 45 mph zone and it was found that vehicles traveling westbound had an 85th percentile speed of 45 mph, while vehicles traveling eastbound had an 85th percentile speed of 51 mph.

Based upon these studies, Mr. Reed recommended that the 45 mph zone remain as is since the speeds measured demonstrate that the current designation is reasonable based upon driver

safety and expectation. Mr. Reed also renewed staff's recommendation to increase the speed limit from 25 mph to 35 mph for an approximately 1000 foot distance from a point about 200 feet before Blue Ridge Drive (where it currently changes to 45 mph) and a point about 250 feet before the entrance to East Brook Manor apartments. It is recommended that the speed after this point remain 25 mph to accommodate the poor sight distance from the East Brook Manor entrance and that the speed before Blue Ridge Drive remain 45 mph. Staff's reasoning for this change is related to the high speeds observed in the 25 mph section and the recognition that 25 mph is too slow a speed for the straightaway section in front of The Eagle's Lodge. Graduating the speed decrease for motorists traveling westbound is expected to encourage compliance, as the speed zones recommended more closely reflect reasonable travel speeds than do the current zones.

The Commission recommended that staff move forward with the proposed changes. Staff will move forward and request formal approval by the Police Chief before implementation. The change is anticipated to take place sometime in May.

5. W Fairview Avenue turn island

Mr. Reed shared the status of planning efforts for the installation of a forced right turn island on W Fairview Avenue at S Main Street this summer. Public Works and Fire met on site to perform trial runs with Tower 1 to determine the turning radius that would need to be accommodated by the island. It is understood that the apparatus will need to go over a portion of the island to make its turn, so a mountable curb design will be used. Mr. Smith mentioned that this turns onto W Fairview Avenue are not currently included in any of the City bus routes, so bus accommodation is non-essential. Public Works plans to coordinate with Transit and Fire anyway as the time for installation approaches so that the island is designed to accommodate any foreseeable uses. Installation will take place at some point this summer after a gas line relocation is completed in the project area.

6. Neff Avenue pedestrian crossing at the Arboretum Trail

Ms. Dang informed the Commission that installation of this pedestrian crossing, along with its associated curb ramps and flashing warning lights, is complete. This project was funded and installed by the Public Works Department.

Other Business/ Announcements

7. Change to Thursday meeting day in June

Mr. Van Wyk explained that the Commission will change to a Thursday meeting day beginning next month to accommodate Mr. Ferrell's schedule. This change is tentatively planned to be in place through August. The Commission will discuss how to proceed at that point, as Mr. Van Wyk will be unavailable on Thursdays after the JMU semester begins in August. Mr. Van Wyk also informed the Commission that he will be out of town for the July and August meetings.

8. Chicago Avenue Corridor Study update

Ms. Dang informed the Commission that a public input meeting was held on April 19th at Park View Mennonite Church to discuss the study and that over 100 community members attended, many of which submitted comments. The comment form has been posted on the project website at www.ChicagoAvenue.org and will be available until May 20th. Comments from all would be appreciated.

At the meeting, City staff and their consulting firm for the project, McCormick Taylor, presented concepts for improvements on Chicago Avenue, Mount Clinton Pike, Park Road, and Parkwood Drive. Also presented were concepts for roundabouts at the intersections of Chicago Avenue & Waterman Drive, Chicago Avenue & Mount Clinton Pike/Park Road, and Park Road & Parkwood Drive as they would compare to more typical improvements, such as traffic signals. In general, attendees were very supportive of the concepts and supported the City in their efforts to try to preserve the character of the Chicago Avenue corridor while still meeting its transportation needs.

9. Bicycle Friendly Community Award

Ms. Dang announced that Harrisonburg was awarded a Bronze designation by the Bicycle Friendly Community organization. Harrisonburg submitted a detailed application for the organization's consideration, which included questions related to bicycle engineering,

enforcement, and education. The award is good for 5 years, after which the City would need to reapply.

10. Month of May announcements

Ms. Dang announced that May is Bike Month and that May 20th is Bike to Work Day, during which breakfast will be available for riders at Court Square. For more information about Bike Month, visit the Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition's website at www.svbcoalition.org.

Mr. Stader announced that May is also Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month as well as Click It or Ticket Month. A recent survey by the Harrisonburg Police Department found that 89% of motorists were wearing their seat belt, which is higher than the national average. The Click It or Ticket enforcement campaign will take place May 22-June 27, with a locality "blitz" May 26-27. Post surveys will be completed to see the effect of the campaign on the percentage of seat belt-wearing drivers.

Adjourn